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Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, October 25, 2007

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Records reveal boys' fear

Thursday, October 25, 2007

By John Agar

The Grand Rapids Press

STANTON -- Chaos reigned in Oliver Braman's house, where he disciplined two of his boys with a cattle prod, punches to the stomach and days of feeding them only oatmeal or rice.

The cattle prod worked.

"(Braman) stated it was done on their bare hind ends, and it was only done a few times," a Montcalm County sheriff's investigator wrote.

"Once that was done to them, they would get in line."

Braman's statements, along with abuse allegations by his sons, Oliver, 14, and Tyler, 15, are contained in police reports obtained by The Press under the Freedom of Information Act.

The boys ran away from home in August and told investigators of abuse, which led to charges against their father. The 9-year-old brother stayed behind.

Braman, 46, was awaiting sentencing when he, his new wife, Nancy Kaczor-Braman, 43, and his 9-year-old son, Nicholas "Elmer" Braman, were found dead Oct. 16 in their Stanton-area home.

The case is particularly troubling because a Montcalm County prosecutor wanted the 9-year-old out of his father's custody, and a Children's Protective Services worker in Saginaw filed paperwork for a suspected case of child abuse or neglect. A CPS worker in Montcalm County did not believe the child to be in danger, and the child stayed with his father.

In interviews, the younger Oliver Braman said his father was "mean" to him and Tyler. His father disciplined them with a cattle prod, usually used for "zapping" cows, when they did not finish chores. His father once used a belt but stopped when the boys threatened to go to authorities, the boy told an interviewer.

He described the shock as painful, but it left no marks. His brother said the two were blamed for everything.

The interviewer wrote: "I noted that it was quite evident that Tyler was uncomfortable speaking about the abuse by his father. Tyler spoke quietly, and it appeared that he was fearful from the abuse."

Kaczor-Braman, who married Braman in early September, reported the boys missing after they ran away. She watched the children while their father, a truck driver, was gone.

"She stated there was no ongoing friction and no reason either child would have disappeared," a sheriff's deputy wrote in a report.

The boys had suffered for some time, court records showed. A court official, in a 2005 hearing, said the boys have "taken control over the chaos in their emotional lives by becoming manipulative."

That official also said court orders had no effect.

"There is no authority that's going to tell this family how to do anything. And I think that represents a risk of

harm to the children."

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Former neighbor accused Braman of rape in 2006

Thursday, October 25, 2007

By Theresa D. McClellan

The Grand Rapids Press

STANTON -- Call it the forgotten clue.

Long before Oliver Braman admitted using a cattle prod on two teen sons or orchestrated the murder-suicide that killed his wife and 9-year-old son, a young woman and her brother tried to warn police the man was a monster.

Shelly Lewis, a former neighbor of Braman, sat down with a state police trooper for 90 minutes in June 2006 to tell how she had been raped by the man starting when she was 14, county records confirm. Lewis' brother, Nick, drove his 21-year-old sister to meet with police, concerned for her and for Braman's sons.

They also say they told police and state child protection workers in 2006 that Braman used a cattle prod to shock his teen boys as discipline, though they believe those complaints were not acted on. Child welfare workers would not comment.

SEE BRAMAN, A2

CONTINUED FROM A1

As state investigators begin reviewing why the boy was left in Braman's

care, the actions of authorities and protective services workers are expected to come under scrutiny. A Senate committee chairman on Wednesday said he likely will hold hearings when the state investigations are complete.

"Where was the breakdown?" said Sen. Mark Jansen, R-Gaines Township, head of the Families and Human Services Committee.

On Oct. 14, Oliver Braman, 46, turned his Stanton home into a gas chamber, killing Nicholas, himself and his third wife, Nancy Kaczor-Braman, with exhaust from a pickup, police said. They were found dead in a bed two days later, after Braman missed a court hearing for using a cattle prod in August on his older sons.

Nicholas himself penned a suicide note defending his father, saying he used the cattle prod on his brothers only "ten times."

The Lewises' 2006 warnings about Braman seemed forgotten by this fall, when prosecutors feared Nicholas was in danger.

Citing Braman's August cattle-prod conviction only, a Montcalm County assistant prosecutor tried in vain to get a state child protection worker to remove Nicholas from the home.

Now 23, Shelly Lewis is devastated by the death of Nicholas, her "little buddy" and former neighbor.

"He did sexual stuff to me when I was 14," she said of Oliver Braman. His abuse lasted for years, adding to her shame, she said.

She also said she told police in June 2006 about the cattle prod Braman was using on teen sons Tyler and Oliver, and that police told her they would forward that information to state child protective service workers.

Nick Lewis said he followed up by making the same cattle prod complaint weeks later to Child and Family Protective Services in Montcalm County. He thought that might bring swifter action against Braman.

About three weeks after lodging that complaint, he was told "there was no reason for further investigation," he said. He said he no longer has the paperwork because he threw it away in disgust.

The Montcalm County protective services office would not comment and referred questions to the Lansing headquarters, where a spokeswoman cited privacy laws and would not discuss the case.

State police also would not comment or confirm whether they received any cattle prod allegations from Shelly Lewis in 2006.

But state police confirmed they took Lewis' rape allegation seriously and investigated Braman in 2006. They forwarded their report to prosecutors, but that's where the case ended.

"I investigated and brought charges to the prosecutor who refused," Trooper Paul Mativa said this week. He would not comment further.

After a Press inquiry this week brought the 2006 allegation to her attention, Montcalm County Prosecutor Andrea Krause reviewed the file and said the assistant prosecutor in charge of the case didn't bring charges -- or forward information to Krause -- because there wasn't enough evidence to proceed. She would not name the assistant but said she supports how the case was handled.

"There wasn't enough to prosecute," Krause said, citing a lack of forensic and corroborating evidence. "Our standard of proof is high in reasonable doubt.

"All we had was what she said, and it was seven years after the fact, which doesn't help," Krause said. The statute of limitations was not an issue, she acknowledged.

She said there was no mention of any child abuse allegations against any of Braman's sons in the police report.

The police file remained in the possession of the prosecutor's office. But it was forgotten because no case was created, and it wasn't an active matter, Krause said.

"While we all would like to have the ability to remember all the cases we ever reviewed, it is quite impossible when we are reviewing over 1,700 police reports and there are only three of us to do so," Krause said. "The rape allegation case had nothing to do with the child abuse case he pled guilty to."

During the rape investigation, Braman denied claims of an underage relationship with Shelly Lewis but admitted to a sexual relationship he said started when he drove her to college in Indiana when she was 20, Krause said. He gave authorities a motive for the allegations: Lewis was angry with him over a land deal, Krause said.

After prosecutors decided in September not to pursue charges, the trooper called Lewis to tell her. "He said I could call the prosecutor and find out why," Lewis said.

"But I just figured they didn't believe me and just kind of folded up inside."

Her next step was to seek a personal protection order against Braman, granted in late June 2006 in Montcalm County Circuit Court.

Braman's two ex-wives told The Press they have no doubt Lewis' rape story is true. Both say Braman was controlling and a master manipulator who had ample time to abuse Lewis, who they said considered the Braman house a second home.

Lewis called Rebecca Jasinski, Braman's second wife and Nicholas' mother, after she learned the boy was killed.

"Shelly called me and told me what happened and apologized about not doing more," Rebecca Jasinski said. "I said, you were 14 years old. I'm 32 and didn't know better. I mean, I knew about domestic abuse and didn't know.

"You get caught up in the spell of that and it's like walking in quicksand, you don't recognize yourself."

Nick Lewis said he believes the prosecutor's office and child protective services staff failed his sister and Braman's boys back in 2006. Nicholas' death makes the lack of action glaring, he said.

"It has to be so obvious that they messed up. It's terrible that nothing was done at that time," he said.

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Kukla to get psych care Macomb Twp.

Family says life in prison doesn't mean treatment for killer mom

October 25, 2007

BY AMBER HUNT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

These days, Jennifer Kukla rocks quietly in her chair. She cries constantly. And if it weren't for the psychotropic drugs she's now taking, there's no telling if she'd again be capable of the horrific violence that landed her in prison.

That's the picture her father painted Wednesday in Macomb County Circuit Court, where Kukla was sentenced to life in prison for fatally stabbing her two young daughters because, she said, she heard voices.

Advertisement

Through tears, Joseph Kukla told Macomb County Circuit Judge Edward Servitto that a mandatory life without parole sentence for his daughter was really a death sentence.

"We fear she will not get mental help, and without it, she will not live," he said.

Some in the legal and medical community say his fears are warranted.

"Prisons aren't great places to get mental health treatment," said Paul Toro, a professor of psychology at Wayne State University.

Neil Rockind, a Southfield defense lawyer, agreed: "She'll be locked up, she'll be treated as a pariah, she'll have no chance at parole, and she won't get the treatment she needs."

But Russ Marlin, spokesman for the Michigan Department of Corrections, said the state's prisons have plenty of practice treating mentally ill inmates, who represent 25% of the system's population.

"We have thousands and thousands of prisoners who get mental health treatment every day," he said. "She'll be given comprehensive treatment."

A jury last month found Kukla, 31, guilty but mentally ill for stabbing 8-year-old Alexandra and 5-year-old Ashley in the throat Feb. 4 in their Macomb Township mobile home.

Kukla told investigators that she heard voices saying they were coming for the children, so she killed them to save them. After the slayings, she told police that she'd waited for a car made of bones to take her to hell.

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said Kukla knew what she was doing was wrong as she chased down the children.

"She has not heard these voices since the day of these murders and has been since that time living as normally as any other prisoner behind bars," Smith said.

Steve Freers, Kukla's lawyer, argued at trial that she was legally insane when she committed the crimes. That argument was bolstered by the testimony of three forensic psychologists -- including one hired by prosecutors.

Kukla is appealing her conviction. Toro said it'd be difficult to overturn the conviction.

"The defense has to prove that she didn't know what she was doing," he said. "How can you have proof of this?"

States began adding the verdict guilty but mentally ill after John Hinckley's attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan in 1981.

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=Kukla+to+get+psych+care+Macomb+Tw...> 10/25/2007

Hinckley was acquitted by reason of insanity. Public outrage prompted some states to drop the insanity defense altogether. Michigan and other states added the option of a guilty but mentally ill conviction.

Freers said that the jurors, who deliberated for just over three hours before reaching the verdict, likely assumed that Kukla would get adequate mental health treatment in prison. Judges don't tell jurors the sentences attached to verdicts so they won't be swayed by the consequences of their decisions.

Kukla will be evaluated within 10 days after her transfer from the Macomb County Jail to the Robert Scott Correctional Facility in Plymouth, Marlin said.

Rockind said the treatment won't be as effective as a facility dedicated to treating mental illness.

"It's not exactly the Mayo Clinic or a rolling estate with green lawns and a day room," he said. "With the treatment she's likely not to get, I don't expect her to get better anytime soon."

Servitto had no discretion in the sentencing. He said he was concerned with Kukla's drug abuse, which her lawyer acknowledged during trial.

Kukla interrupted him: "Really, the only problem was alcohol."

That was her only comment during the trial or sentencing, save answering the judge with "yes, sirs."

Addressing the court as his daughter sobbed before sentencing, Joseph Kukla wept and said the family misses Alexandra and Ashley terribly.

"We will leave court today to go to the cemetery and put down flowers, and tell them their mom and all of us miss and love them," he said.

Contact **AMBER HUNT** at 586-469-4682 or alhunt@freepress.com.

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Thursday, October 25, 2007

Mount Clemens

Mother gets life for killing girls

Dad of woman convicted of horrific stabbing deaths in Macomb Township says family 'living a nightmare.'

Edward L. Cardenas / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- The father of a Macomb Township mother, who was sentenced to life in prison Wednesday for the stabbing deaths of her children, said the family has suffered since the killings.

Just prior to Jennifer Kukla's sentence, her father, Joseph Kukla, talked about how the family has coped.

"We have been living a nightmare since Feb. 4, 2007. We lost two beautiful and loving granddaughters," he said.

Advertisement Kukla's prison has not yet been selected. She was convicted by a jury last month of first-degree murder, but deemed mentally ill. She killed Alexandra, 8, and Ashley, 5, in the early morning hours of Feb. 4 in her Macomb Township mobile home.

Kukla entered Macomb Circuit Court wearing a blue jail jumpsuit with her wrists shackled to a chain around her waist.

Joseph Kukla said he felt the description to the jury of the girls' deaths and the disembowelment of the family's three dogs following the murder was unnecessary.

"When we leave court today, we are going to the cemetery and put down flowers, and tell the girls their mom and all of us miss them and love them," he said.

The sometimes tearful 31-year-old stood before Circuit Judge Edward Servitto while her attorney argued again that Kukla acted on commands from voices in her head to kill her daughters.

"I truly believe at the beginning of the case, and at the end, the only reasonable explanation for Miss Kukla's actions was she was mentally ill at the time of the attack, and she was legally insane," said Steve Freers, who is concerned about the care she will receive in prison.

Jurors took just over three hours of deliberation to reach the verdict Sept. 12 after hearing nearly three days of testimony.

Attorneys on both sides agreed that Kukla is mentally ill. Freers had cited testimony of psychologists that Kukla suffered a brief psychotic episode when she killed her two children.

William Cataldo, chief of the prosecutor's homicide unit, argued during the trial that Kukla knew the difference between right and wrong when she fatally stabbed her children with a kitchen knife.

Servitto said he was concerned about her use of crack cocaine and LSD.

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said after the verdict that she knew what she was doing.

"The facts were laid out to the jury in such a fashion that she knew right from wrong," Smith said. "With the horrific nature of these crimes she deserves to be held accountable."

Freers advised his client to appeal the jury's decision.

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WARREN

2 charged in mauling death

Rottweiler killed baby girl

October 25, 2007

BY AMBER HUNT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Alexis Cox anxiously awaited the day she would learn whether criminal charges would be filed against the men whose rottweiler killed her 3-month-old daughter, Kylie.

On Wednesday, she found out: Jason Winters, 22, and Christopher Fura, 19, were arraigned on charges of involuntary manslaughter and second-degree child abuse. If convicted, the two Warren men face up to 15 years in prison.

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"I'm kind of glad," Cox, 17, told the Free Press from her Warren home.

Her mother, Lisa Livingston, added: "It's not going to bring her back, but somebody had to be charged with something."

Cox said Kylie was mauled in a friend's house on Toepfer Road after she'd left the room to warm up a bottle.

A friend had just taken Kylie -- who would have turned 4 months old two days after the attack -- out of a car seat when the dog attacked, she said.

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said Wednesday that investigators took about five weeks after the Sept. 12 death to levy the charges because they were trying to determine whether the men knew that the 120-pound dog -- which they'd owned for just 10 days -- was aggressive.

"The dog had bitten Fura and had been aggressive toward the child," Smith said. "They were on notice that this was an aggressive dog, but they still brought it to a home where they knew children were and they didn't take any steps to secure it."

Neither Fura nor Winters could be reached for comment Wednesday.

Fura told the Free Press after the attack that he believed the dog had mistaken Kylie for a stuffed animal and was just trying to play.

Livingston, 34, said she's disappointed the homeowner wasn't charged as well. She also claimed that the dog's previous owner knew it was aggressive.

"This could've all been prevented," she said, "if they'd done what they needed to do with the dog."

The dog was killed by the county's animal control after the attack.

Livingston said her daughter has gotten counseling nearly every day since the fatal attack. "You hear things about her being in a better place, but no," said Livingston, who was in the hospital room with Cox when Kylie was born.

"She was just brought into this world, and she was taken out no sooner than she was brought in."

Contact **AMBER HUNT** at 586-469-4682 or alhunt@freepress.com.

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Thursday, October 25, 2007

Two charged in mauling of infant

Stepbrothers negligent for not watching dog in fatal attack at Warren home, prosecutor says.

George Hunter / The Detroit News

WARREN -- Two stepbrothers were criminally negligent when they left their 120-pound Rottweiler alone and it fatally mauled an infant while the pair played video games in a nearby room, prosecutors said Wednesday.

Christopher Fura, 19, and his stepbrother Jason Winters, 22, both of Warren were charged in 37th District Court with two counts each of involuntary manslaughter and second-degree child abuse in connection with the Sept. 12 death of Kylie Cox. The 4-month-old died after being attacked by the dog during a party in a home on Toepfer.

"These two brought the dog to this house, knowing it had shown aggressive tendencies in the past," said Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith. "Then they went into the next room to play video games, leaving this aggressive dog unattended. They had a legal duty to make sure this dog was fenced or leashed or caged, and they didn't do that."

Advertisement If convicted, Fura and Winters could spend up to 19 years in prison.

Only about a week before the attack, an aunt of the stepbrothers gave them the dog, named Chopper, Smith said.

"They knew the dog had been aggressive toward children in the past, and it actually bit Fura," Smith said. "So they knew this was a dangerous dog. The dog's history of aggressiveness is something we took into account before bringing these charges."

Alexis Cox, Kylie's mother, said the dog was given to Fura and Winters because it had bit their cousin.

"They should never have brought that dog to the house, knowing it already had bit someone else's kid," Cox said.

Cox said she is undergoing counseling to help deal with losing her daughter. "I'm doing OK," said Cox, 17. "I'm staying busy, trying to keep my mind occupied so I don't think about it."

Smith said the brothers knew Kylie was likely to be at the house. "The baby had been at the house before when they were there, so they knew there was a good likelihood it would be there that day -- but they brought it to the house anyway," Smith said. "What they did was criminally negligent."

Alexis Cox's mother, Lisa Livingston, said she was thankful Fura and Winters were criminally charged. "They needed to be held accountable for that, so I'm glad they were charged," she said. "But that's not going to bring the baby back."

Winters' paternal grandmother, who did not want to be identified by name, called it "an unfortunate accident."

Warren District Judge Jennifer Faunce set bail for Fura and Winters at \$100,000. Their preliminary examinations are scheduled for Nov. 1.

You can reach George Hunter at (586) 468-7396 or ghunter@detnews.com.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Children approached by strangers

Thursday, October 25, 2007

BY REX HALL JR.

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THREE RIVERS -- Three Rivers police and St. Joseph County sheriff's detectives are investigating four separate incidents in less than a week in which children were either approached or followed by people in vehicles, authorities said.

In the latest incident, on Tuesday afternoon, police said a man in a brown minivan approached a girl at about 3:15 p.m. on Millard Street in Three Rivers and asked her if she wanted a ride. When the girl, a student in middle school, replied no, the man told her to get into the vehicle, Three Rivers Sgt. Jason Bingaman said. The girl fled on foot and was not injured, police said.

The incident is similar to reports received by police last Thursday and Friday. On Thursday, sheriff's investigators said a man in a vehicle approached a girl in the driveway of her Flowerfield Township home and gave her instructions in a threatening tone.

She refused the instructions, and the man drove away when another vehicle approached, police have said.

Bingaman said police in Three Rivers also are investigating two separate reports received Friday that said two girls and a boy were followed by a tan-colored sport utility vehicle that drove slowly behind them as they walked.

Police could not say if the four incidents are connected.

Police are advising parents to have children walk in groups, not to talk to strangers and to avoid areas where there aren't many people.

Anyone with information is asked to call Three Rivers police at (269) 278-1235 or the sheriff's office at (269) 467-9045.

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Thursday, October 25, 2007

Editorial

Health care bills will drive up costs

The Detroit News

Michigan legislators are working to make health care more accessible, and that's a good thing, but their efforts still rely too heavily on government mandates.

Bills that passed the Senate and are awaiting action in the House would create a universal-type health care system with insurance products and prices set by an appointed board. The bills would force health care companies to offer continued coverage on a parent's policy for children until age 26 if they meet certain conditions.

Private insurance companies would be responsible for the plans, which would be subsidized by federal matching funds and would primarily serve low-income and uninsured residents. The Michigan Helping Ensure Affordable and Reliable Treatment Act (MI-Heart) essentially provides the framework for Gov. Jennifer Granholm's Michigan First Health Care Plan, which she proposed in 2006.

Advertisement The costs associated with the three tie-barred bills are not known because much would depend on federal dollars. A Senate Fiscal Agency analysis, however, concludes that prices will increase for employers, the

insured, and state and local governments that provide health care if the two bills that force insurance companies to provide coverage for adult children are passed into law.

"If federal dollars are involved, there has to be some regulation," says Sen. Tom George, R-Kalamazoo, the universal access bill's sponsor and a doctor.

True, but that regulation doesn't have to extend to the determination of what illnesses, diseases or conditions must be covered or to arbitrarily set an age for an adult child to be included on a parent's insurance.

George says universal coverage is not being mandated, rather universal access is, and that private insurers won't be forced to enter into these markets. The governing board, however, could later "recommend" such mandates, he says.

Perhaps the three bills that passed the Senate and moved to the House can be salvaged with greater flexibility for market solutions, but as they're written today, they would drive up costs and put government in charge of decisions that should be made by the market.

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GOP cries foul on timing of children's health vote

- Story Highlights
- House vote on children's health care insurance scheduled for Thursday
- Many Republicans who would vote "no" will be out of town then, GOP says
- GOP house members will be in California as President Bush tours wildfire area
- One Republican says Democratic leaders are "taking advantage of a disaster"

From Deirdre Walsh and Jessica Yellin

CNN

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- House Republicans are fuming over Democrats' decision to hold the next vote on the State Children's Health Insurance Program on Thursday -- when many Republicans will be in California as President Bush tours areas hit by wildfires.

"Five to seven members are going, all of whom would be 'no' votes, and [Democrats] know it," House Republican Whip [Roy Blunt](#) told CNN. "This is clearly designed to minimize the Republican opposition to this bill."

President Bush vetoed the proposed five-year expansion and \$35 billion spending increase for SCHIP on October 3.

House Democrats tried to override the veto last week, but failed to get the two-thirds majority needed for a veto. The bill to be taken up on Thursday is a revised version that Democrats hope will win converts.

At a meeting of Republican House members to discuss the revised bill, Rep. Louis Gohmert of Texas said the Democrats are "taking advantage of a disaster to loot the American treasury."

Thirteen Republicans from fire-stricken districts signed a letter to House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) on Wednesday, urging her as "a fellow Californian" to postpone the vote.

"Members should not have to choose between making an important vote in Washington or being in California helping our constituents to get the aid they need to rebuild their homes and their lives," they wrote.

But Democratic House aides defended the scheduling of Thursday's vote. Stacey Bernards, spokesperson for House Majority Leader [Steny Hoyer](#), told CNN Democrats are affected by the fires too.

"The fires aren't partisan," she said. "We are very concerned for the victims of the fires but tomorrow's vote outcome will not be affected by Republicans and Democrats who will not be there."

Another Democratic House leadership aide told CNN, "The White House and Republicans would like to postpone this legislation because they don't want a deal. It's that simple."

At the Republican meeting, party leaders urged their members not to vote for the bill, saying "no one has seen any details" of the new legislation.

"I urged that the team stick together and improve the bill," Republican leader [John Boehner](#) told CNN. Both Boehner and Blunt said they asked Hoyer to delay Thursday's vote.

In a press conference Wednesday evening, Democratic leaders announced the new bill will include changes on major issues that Republicans complained about in the last debate. They said it will tighten the restriction on illegal immigrants receiving SCHIP benefits; cap the income levels of families eligible for SCHIP; move adults out of SCHIP faster; and include new provisions to encourage SCHIP families to keep private health insurance.

The Democratic leadership insisted they had addressed every concern Republicans raised.

"We hope that tomorrow this legislation will be overwhelmingly approved," Hoyer said. "We hope that the Senate will approve it next week and that we will again send it to the President, this time responding to his concerns."

"We hope that he will sign it. The children of America and their families are certainly hoping that that will be the case."

Republican Judy Biggert -- who voted against the original bill, but has been targeted by Democrats as a possible new "yes" vote -- described the changes as "cosmetic."

Rep. Charles Dent, a Republican who supported the bill, told CNN that he believes there will be "some defections, but not many." He suggested

<http://cnn.site.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=GOP+cries+foul+on+timing+of+childre...> 10/25/2007

Democrats would win more votes if they held the bill until next week.

A House Republican leadership aide who attended their closed door meeting Wednesday afternoon said no members indicated they would change their vote.

All About [Roy Blunt](#) • [Nancy Pelosi](#) • [Steny Hoyer](#) • [John Boehner](#)

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<http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/10/25/schip.vote/index.html>

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Head-on accident victim was scheduled to face charges of abuse at foster home

by SUSAN YOUNGER
staff reporter

The Otter Lake woman killed in a traffic accident Tuesday was facing charges linked to suspected abuse at the adult foster care home she owned.

Linda Haney, 56, died in a collision involving Dean Everett Davis, 37, of Davison, who was fleeing Michigan State Police. Two other Otter Lake residents were seriously hurt in the crash.

Haney was scheduled for an Oct. 30 trial before Circuit Court Judge Nick Holowka for suspected abuse of an adult while under her care at the Grandhaven Manor Home that she owned.

"She faced charges of vulnerable abuse third degree and fourth degree," said Lapeer County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Mike Hodges.

In January, Michigan State Police trooper Aaron Kramer was contacted by health workers who suspected a man, 59, who has diminished mental capacity, had been abused.

The victim told Kramer that when he accidentally urinated in his pants, Haney punished him by slapping him and making him stand outdoors. He said he often had to eat alone.

The trooper observed bruising on the victim's side, above the waste and a small bruise on his upper back. He was removed from Grandhaven Manor. A caretaker at his new home told Kramer when the man first came into her custody, she observed several marks on him and he was very dirty.

During Kramer's investigation, a witness told Mercier that Haney abused the man and had abused other patients. He said when the man wet himself, Haney would literally drag him outside and set him in the snow; she often make him shovel the snow in wet clothes. The witness further said that he saw Haney hit the man, shove his face in feces and make him eat on the

floor. He said she ignored the man's pleas for help for hours when he was unable to leave the toilet because of a cast on his leg.

Haney was arrested by Kramer on Feb. 1.

She also owned Imagination Island, a day care center on North Saginaw Street in Mayfield Township.

Ramsey Mashni, Haney's attorney, couldn't be reached by press time.

Susan Younger may be reached at (810)664-0811, Ext. 8122 or susan.younger@lapeergroup.com

The County Press

Woman killed in wreck, suspect caught

by SUSAN YOUNGER
staff reporter

A local business woman was killed in a fatal traffic crash that seriously injured two other people in Genesee County Tuesday.

Linda Haney, 56, of Otter Lake, died in a collision involving a Davison man, 38, who was fleeing Michigan State Police. Haney was well known in the community as the owner of Imagination Island, a day care center on North Saginaw Street in Mayfield Township.

"My grandma owned it for about eight years," said Brittany Haney, 18, of Lapeer. "She had other businesses, but this was her main one. She ran it too, because she loved kids, and they loved her. We were really close."

The suspect was stopped by a trooper about 11:40 a.m. for a traffic violation near Coldwater Road and M-15 in Richfield Township.

"He was driving erratically," said Michigan State Police Lt. Stephen Sipes, assistant commander of the Flint Post. "He was also speeding."

The suspect's car fled the scene and was involved in a crash on Oak Road in Richfield Township with a pickup driven by Haney, a female passenger, 59, of Otter Lake, and another truck driven by an Otter Lake man, 57.

The suspect's car was stranded in a ditch, and he fled on foot into a corn field and a wooded area. Michigan State police organized a manhunt involving helicopters, tracking dogs and patrol units. Area police departments set up a perimeter, said Sipes.

The hunt caused LakeVille High School officials to order a lock down and the volleyball team had to cancel an away game, said LakeVille Schools Superintendent Ted Gardella.

The Davison man was captured about 5:30 p.m. after a woman received a reverse 911 call to look for him. She spotted him near Henderson Road and called police.

The suspect had not been arraigned at press time Thursday. Further details will be available in the Sunday edition of The County Press.

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Woman reported psychological issues STERLING HEIGHTS

Hospital released her before killings

October 25, 2007

BY CHRISTY ARBOSCELLO

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A 61-year-old Sterling Heights woman thought she was experiencing what she called a "nervous breakdown" hours before she repeatedly slammed her 87-year-old mother's head on the garage floor and then took her own life, police said Wednesday.

A coworker of the daughter, Lois Radlick, found the bodies Monday in the garage on Tericrest Drive -- across the street and a few doors down from the scene of another murder-suicide three years ago.

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Radlick had not shown up for work Oct. 17, the day she called police and told the officers who visited that she was having psychological problems.

"She voiced concerns about her own well-being -- that she might be having a nervous breakdown," Lt. Michael Reese said.

Fearing that she was suicidal, officers transported her to Henry Ford Macomb Hospital.

"From what I understand, she must have been seen by a physician and was released" that day, Reese said.

She later killed her mother, Elsie Coryell, and then committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning exuded from a car and motorcycle in the garage, police said.

Radlick lived alone with her mother who didn't have any known health problems. The women had troubles in their relationship, police said.

"The daughter thought the mother was basically controlling her life," said Reese, speaking about some reported financial troubles.

Suzanne Schut, of Henry Ford Macomb, said she couldn't comment specifically on a patient's treatment. Patients brought to the Mt. Clemens campus for psychological treatment are evaluated by a doctor and referred to either the in-patient or outpatient program, she said.

Contact **CHRISTY OYAMA-ARBOSCELLO** at 586-469-8085 or arboscello@freepress.com.

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Police seek man in Clinton Twp. woman's death

She was stabbed in apartment complex

October 24, 2007

By AMBER HUNT and KRISTALE IVEZAJ

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

A Clinton Township man sought by police in the stabbing death of his live-in girlfriend Tuesday night was convicted last year of assaulting her, court records show.

Grace Bommarito, 43, was found dead Tuesday night in the Peri Manor apartments on Harper Road north of Metro Parkway, where she lived with her boyfriend, John Bomar.

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Police were looking Wednesday evening for Bomar, who turns 58 today. Clinton Township Police Officer Norm Graleski said Bomar fled the apartment after the stabbing.

The Macomb County Prosecutor's Office on Wednesday authorized a first-degree murder charge against Bomar.

The Macomb County Prosecutor's Office on Wednesday authorized a first-degree murder charge against Bomar.

In June 2006, Bomar was convicted of felonious assault for attacking Bommarito with a weapon, court records show. He was sentenced in March 2007 to up to three years in prison. He was released on probation, and apparently resumed living with Bommarito.

On Sept. 15, 2006, Bomar obtained a personal protection order against Bommarito which expired in March

William Santilli, manager of Peri Manor, said the couple, who had leased the apartment for about a year, fought loudly. Still, he said he never suspected that Bomar, whom he said was calm and laid back, could be capable of murder.

Medical Examiner Daniel Spitz said an autopsy Wednesday showed Bommarito was stabbed multiple times. "It was one stab to the heart that killed her," he said.

A neighbor told police she heard Bommarito yell for help before stumbling out of her apartment and falling into a hallway, authorities said. The neighbor called 911 at 9:15 p.m.

Bommarito was taken to Mt. Clemens Regional Medical Center, where she was pronounced dead.

Bomar is about 5-foot-8 and weighs 160 to 200 pounds, police said. He can't move his right arm, which is scarred and shorter than his left arm.

Anyone with information can call 586-493-7857.

Contact **AMBER HUNT** at 586-469-4682 or alhunt@freepress.com.

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Hospitalized man faces charges

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

THE SAGINAW NEWS

A 47-year-old Buena Vista Township man who was in a poison-induced coma faces charges in the stabbing death of his girlfriend.

Robin E. Stevens, who lives at 5920 W. Robin in the Robin Glen Mobile Home Community, faces an open charge of murder in the slaying of Debra L. Plesko, 49, of Freeland. Detectives said Plesko died between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Oct. 5.

Stevens was under guard at an undisclosed hospital, Saginaw County District Court officials said.

Stevens lapsed into a coma after taking the poison, police said, but he is now awake.

During a Wednesday, Oct. 31, preliminary hearing, prosecutors will present evidence to District Judge Terry L. Clark, who will determine whether Stevens should stand trial in Circuit Court. Stevens is to appear at the hearing, officials said.

The slaying likely resulted from a domestic dispute between Stevens and Plesko, authorities said.

Police found Stevens about 2 p.m. Oct. 7 on the north end of the Buena Vista Township. They found him next to Plesko's 1997 Buick LeSabre suffering from a failed suicide attempt.

Police declined to say what poison Stevens ingested. v

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Article published Oct 25, 2007

Speaking out

By Alison Bergsieker
STAFF WRITER

According to the FBI, 11 percent of the 1,342 known intimate partner homicides nationwide involved male victims.

Eleven percent may seem small, but the number of male victims speaking out in domestic violence situations has grown immensely.

And local police say domestic violence cases rank near the top of weekly incidents, and they say they are noticing a dramatic increase in male victims.

"Domestic violence is an issue everywhere," said Detective Chris Miller of the Oakland County Sheriff's Highland substation. "The economy is bad, the cost of living is up, forcing people to work more with less vacation time, and we tend to see a rise in domestic violence. In Michigan, there is zero tolerance for domestic violence."

Miller noted the issue — once revolving around almost all female victims — has changed in the Highland Township area.

"In the last several years, I've noticed that it isn't just a crime against women," Miller said. "There's been a rise across the board — not just an increase in cases, but gender-wise too."

Many cases involving male victims stem from female aggressors with drug and alcohol problems, Miller said.

Highland Detective Craig Cooper agreed.

"At least 30 percent of people that we arrest are women. In the past, guys didn't call. Nowadays they do," Cooper said. "Domestic violence calls are one of the most common calls we get. We get several calls a week."

Just last week, five reports were taken involving family trouble, harassment, domestic assault or domestic child abuse at the Highland substation.

Miller was commended at the 2007 Oakland County Domestic Violence Prevention Awards ceremony for an eight-hour interview with John Jordan Anderson, who strangled a Milford teenager to death.

Anderson had said he was an acquaintance of the victim but confessed to the murder during the interview with Miller and will serve 20 years in prison.

Domestic violence also is a prevalent issue in Commerce Township, according to Oakland County Sheriff's Commerce substation Lt. Dennis Davis.

"We get more domestic violence cases than our share," Davis said. "Sometimes we could have four, five or six a day or none at all, or we could have one to two cases a week. There's definitely been an upswing in cases where males are victim. More men report more often than they did in the past."

In Michigan, police are now allowed to arrest aggressors even if the victim doesn't want to press charges, a law that can sometimes cause conflicts, Davis said.

Davis said incidents like stalking may seem trivial, but needs to be reported early on.

"A lot of times stalking leads into other things," Davis said. "As soon as you feel it, you've got to report it."

"You may have a tendency to blow it off. If the relationship was sour, chances are it's not going to get better."

Contact Alison Bergsieker at (248) 685-1507 ext. 260 or at abergsieker@gannett.com.


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Shelby council member charged with welfare fraud

Posted by [Heather VanDyke | Grand Rapids Press News Service](#) October 25, 2007 10:30AM

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SHELBY -- A longtime council member has turned herself in on felony welfare fraud charges.

Andrea Garcia was arraigned Tuesday in the Oceana County District Court on two four-year felony charges: one count of "failure to inform" and one count of welfare fraud, over \$500.

The arrest warrant does not indicate how much money Garcia is accused of bilking the welfare agency, but Oceana County Prosecutor Terry Shaw said the amount is in the "thousands."

"The allegations mean that (Garcia) applied for, and received, public assistance that she would not have been entitled to because she was receiving other income that she didn't report," Shaw said.

Shaw said the Office of Inspector General -- a criminal justice agency within the Michigan Department of Human Services -- began investigating Garcia in August 2006 on a "tip" officials received.

The prosecutor's office received a file on Garcia in July, but Shaw then requested additional information be provided before charges were filed.

Shaw said he received a final report on Garcia last month and a warrant for her arrest was then issued. Garcia turned herself in to the Oceana County Sheriff's Department on Tuesday, Shaw said. She remains free on a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond.

A preliminary examination for Garcia is slated for Nov. 5. Garcia could not be reached for comment.

Village President Bill Glover declined to comment on whether Garcia will remain on the council, and claimed he hadn't been made aware any charges had been filed against her.

She has been a council member since 1997, according to village records.

But Garcia -- along with Glover and council member Dr. Steven Lessens -- have all been targeted for recall since the July resignation of veteran police chief Bob Wilson.

Boisterous residents at recent council meetings have accused Garcia and other council members for ousting Wilson over personal vendettas they have against him.

Meanwhile, Tim French, who also serves as the part-time police chief for the village of New Era, was recently hired by the Shelby council to replace Wilson.

French said he plans to continue working for both departments. The Shelby chief position is full-time, but the New Era position allows for a "flexible" schedule, French said.

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Posted: 10-25-2007

Garcia charged with welfare fraud

Andrea Garcia, 50, of 250 N. State St., Shelby, was arraigned in 78th District Court in Hart Tuesday on two counts of welfare fraud.

Count 1, welfare fraud, failure to inform, \$500 or more, alleges that while receiving food stamps she neglected or refused to submit information concerning changes in circumstances that would decrease the need for relief; and Count 2, welfare fraud over \$500, alleging that she obtained a larger amount of assistance or relief than that to which she was entitled, consisting of food stamps, involving a value of over \$500.

Both counts are four-year and/or \$5,000 felony charges.

Garcia was released on a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond.

Court records list the FIA (Family Independence Agency) as the arresting agency.

The case was opened in August 2006, according to Oceana County Prosecuting Attorney Terry Shaw, with an investigation conducted by the state inspector general's office. Inspectors spoke with Shaw in late September 2006. Shaw said there was more investigation after that contact and a report was issued to him July 9, 2007. He requested further information, which was issued in a report Sept. 13, 2007.

"She (Garcia) was aware of the investigation," Shaw said.

A preliminary hearing is set for 4 p.m., Nov. 5 in district court.

Garcia is a Shelby Village Council member. She is one of three council members facing a recall election.

Garcia was not available for comment at press time Tuesday.

Michigan's jobless rates rose slightly last month in 14 markets

October 25, 2007

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LANSING -- Seasonally unadjusted unemployment rates rose slightly in 14 of Michigan's 17 regional labor markets in September, state officials said Thursday.

Total employment dropped in 12 regions from August to September. The biggest drop came in Northwest Lower Michigan as the summer tourism season began to wind down.

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The monthly survey of employers by the state Department of Labor and Economic Growth showed that seasonally unadjusted payroll jobs in Michigan education rose in September as students returned to college and K-12 schools.

But such jobs dropped in the areas of construction, leisure and hospitality, and trade, transportation and utilities.

Since September 2006, jobless rates have increased slightly in 15 regions, while they've dropped slightly in the Monroe and Niles-Benton Harbor regions.

Regional unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted, but national and state unemployment rates are adjusted to remove seasonal influences such as production cycles, holidays, model changeovers in the auto industry and climate conditions.

Michigan's seasonally adjusted jobless rate in September was 7.5 percent, highest in the nation.

Regional unadjusted jobless rates for September ranged from a low of 5.1 percent in Ann Arbor to a high of 8.3 percent in Flint.

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Lansing-area jobless rate at 5.8 percent

Midday update

Jeremy W. Steele
Lansing State Journal

The Lansing region's unemployment rate rose slightly to 5.8 percent in September.

That came as the state's construction and manufacturing sectors continued to lose jobs.

The seasonally unadjusted rate was up from 5.7 percent last month and 5.6 percent a year ago, according to data released today by the Department of Labor & Economic Growth.

Total employment fell by 1,300 from a year ago to 235,200. The labor force - the total number of people working or looking for work - fell by 800 over the last year to 249,700.

Analysts attributed much of the loss to buyouts in the automotive manufacturing sector.

Payroll data showed the region added 900 jobs, attributed largely to a seasonal upswing in education and health services and government. That was up 0.4 percent from a year ago.

Seasonally unadjusted unemployment rates rose slightly in 14 of Michigan's 17 regional labor markets in September, state officials said. Regional unadjusted jobless rates ranged from a low of 5.1 percent in Ann Arbor to a high of 8.3 percent in Flint.

Michigan's seasonally adjusted jobless rate in September was 7.5 percent, highest in the nation.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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Article published Oct 25, 2007
State budget talks continue today
Associated Press

LANSING — Michigan lawmakers are ready to go over details of state budget proposals they soon could be asked to vote on.

Lawmakers need to slash more than \$430 million in planned state spending before the end of the month. Failure to do so could cause another partial government shutdown like the one Michigan experienced at the beginning of the month.

The first round of conference committee meetings have been delayed. But more than a dozen panels are expected to meet later in the day.

Budget hangs on Medicaid, hunting

Lawmakers debate health cuts, license fees

October 25, 2007

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF

FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU CHIEF

LANSING -- Negotiations to pin down a 2007-08 state budget could come down to this: How will Michigan deal with poor people, foster children and wayward youths?

And one other thing: the cost of hunting and fishing licenses.

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As lawmakers race against an Oct. 31 deadline, when a temporary budget extension expires, differences over how to make \$435 million in spending cuts have narrowed mostly to a few items that reflect philosophical differences over government's role.

It's unlikely the state would face a shutdown as it did last month when the Legislature wrestled in marathon sessions to resolve most of a looming \$1.75-billion deficit. Lawmakers did most of the job then with increases in the income tax (effective Oct. 1) and by charging the state's 6% sales tax for some services beginning Dec. 1.

But they gave themselves one more month to iron out the details of state budgets.

Rep. George Cushingberry, D-Detroit, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, predicted Wednesday it would be resolved by next week, with no need for another extension.

"I'm amazed at how well it's going," Cushingberry said.

The House and Senate have agreed on some of the biggest-ticket items, such as the Department of Corrections' \$2-billion budget, and a \$13-billion School Aid Fund that will increase money to school districts by 1%.

Several other departments likely will get final approval today or early next week, such as money for State Police, agriculture and state courts.

Then there are the tough nuts.

The most difficult could be Medicaid. A Republican plan would eliminate the health care coverage for 16,000 19- and 20-year-olds and for about 42,000 grandparents and other relatives other than parents who care for low-income children. Combined, those cuts would save \$49 million.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm opposes the cuts, saying they would harm some of the state's most vulnerable people.

"We are not interested in kicking people off health care," Granholm spokeswoman Liz Boyd said.

One option is to cut Medicaid reimbursements to doctors and hospitals, which could result in fewer physicians treating poor patients.

Granholm does support reducing day care payments to low-income families whose parents work as a condition of receiving welfare. The savings: \$28 million.

In all, \$80 million stands to be cut from the Department of Human Services.

Sharon Parks of the Michigan League for Human Services said even small cuts have an impact on poor families. She said some 19-year-olds who leave foster care would lose their health coverage with little support to find jobs.

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=Budget+hangs+on+Medicaid%2C+huntin...> 10/25/2007

Some lawmakers want to privatize foster care services and more of the state's detention programs for juvenile lawbreakers. Granholm is cool to the plan, noting that the state already contracts with many private foster care agencies. In some cases, she says, state employees can do the work better and more cheaply.

Another contentious issue: raising the price of hunting and fishing licenses sold to hundreds of thousands of Michigan residents.

Under a proposal, the cost of an all-species fishing license (including trout and salmon) would rise from \$28 to \$31 in 2008 and gradually to \$44 by 2013.

A deer license for a resident would rise from \$15 to \$18.75 next year and to \$33 by 2013.

Rep. Michael Lahti, D-Hancock, said a political heavyweight, the National Rifle Association, opposes license fee increases.

The Department of Natural Resources has warned of deep cuts without higher fees, including layoffs of 14 conservation officers, closing 37 state parks and recreation areas and closing two fish hatcheries.

Proposed fee hikes for air and water permits are stalling an agreement on the Department of Environmental Quality budget.

And a dispute over where to build a second bridge over the Detroit River is blocking agreement on the Department of Transportation budget. Supporters of a new span south of the Ambassador Bridge want to continue a state study of the issue, while opponents, prodded by the owner of the Ambassador Bridge, want to cut off state money for the study.

Contact **CHRIS CHRISTOFF** at 517-372-8660 or christoff@freepress.com.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Michigan Medicaid facts

Medicaid pays for health care for about 1.5 million people in Michigan who are from low-income families, are blind, disabled or residents of nursing homes.

\$6 billion: amount of federal money spent on Medicaid in Michigan.

\$2 billion: amount of state tax money spent on Medicaid in Michigan.

70%: of all Michigan Medicaid spending is for elderly and disabled people.

Two-thirds: Michigan nursing home patients covered by Medicaid.

50%-plus: of Michigan's Medicaid recipients are under age 18 and not disabled.

One-third: of Michigan's school-age children receive their health care through Medicaid.

80%: Michigan mental health payments covered by Medicaid.

IN OUR OPINION**Compromise on Medicaid cuts**

October 25, 2007

Memo to Lansing leaders: Remember that brink you all pushed the state over for a few hours at the start of this month? Let's not go back there, OK? You know what you have to do, and you know how soon it has to be done. No excuses. No circus acts. Put on your Nikes and just do it.

There are indeed some tough choices facing Gov. Jennifer Granholm and the Legislature to cut spending by \$440 million for the fiscal year that is already almost a month old. But that cannot possibly be news to them. The numbers have to add up -- it says so in the state Constitution all are sworn to uphold -- and the Legislature owes the governor the courtesy of enough time to read budget bills before she has to sign them next Thursday. Territorial squabbles -- mainly over which prisons and Secretary of State offices will close -- should be left to the departments involved.

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That still leaves some big, unattractive decisions, particularly on Medicaid.

The Democratic governor wants to pare back payments to doctors and other health care providers; the Republicans generally don't. Republicans want to drop some people from eligibility, chiefly 19- and 20-year-olds and what are known as caretaker relatives -- people who care for others who receive Medicaid, such as when family members take on responsibility for a relative's children in the foster care system. It makes sense to help protect the health of foster parents if the system is to work properly for the kids.

The Healthy Michigan Fund, which provides grants for prevention activities, is another health-related target. It also has ardent legislative supporters.

The best compromise may be to grab a bit from everywhere: stop intake of 19- and 20-year-olds for this fiscal year, with hopes of reinstating them next year; then gather some revenue from prevention funds, and ask doctors to pick up the rest, with the hope that it will amount to just a small cut in their payments. All these categories should get top priority for restoration when and if Michigan's economic picture improves.

The Legislature continues to bypass another option for savings -- one that could ease some of the other crunches -- via sentencing reforms that would slow or end prison growth. Lawmakers with law-and-order platforms have to start acknowledging the trade-offs of tough sentences, from paying doctors less to longer license plate lines.

No one said making these cuts would be easy. But everyone knows what needs to be done. Maybe Wilson Pickett could afford to "wait till the midnight hour" in 1965, but this is 2007 and the people of Michigan should not have to.

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